Nixon Calls Top Aides to Camp David

9/5/74

New Statement Is Indicated

By Peter Masley
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President Nixon called his top aides, defense lawyer and speechwriters to Camp David yesterday, indicating that a major new presidential statement on Watergate or impeachment was being considered.

Deputy press secretary Gerald L. Warren discounted the possibility that a Nixon speech was being readied. "I don't think you should speculate along that line," he told reporters.

However, he would not rule out the possibility of a new Nixon statement as the House draws nears debate and voting on three articles of impeachment.

Late last week Warren declined to discuss the strategy Mr. Nixon would use to defend himself in the impeachment process. The appearance at Camp David yesterday of his top aides suggested that the President had reached a major decision and was preparing to announce it.

Called to the Maryland Catoctin Mountains presidential compound were staff chief Alexander M. Haig Jr., special counsel James D. St. Clair, press secretary Ronald L. Ziegler, and speechwriters Patrick Buchanan and Raymond K. Price.

Already at Camp David were the President and his family and Mr. Nixon's friend, C. G. (Bebe) Rebozo, all of whom arrived Saturday night.

The President devoted a large portion of his time last week listening to tape recordings of 64 White House conversations that are being turned over to U.S. District Court Judge John J. Sirica under a Supreme Court order for use in the Sept. 9 Watergate cover-up conspiracy trial of former Nixon aides and campaign officials.

After the House Judiciary Committee reported out three impeachment articles for House consideration, the White House was pressed by newsmen for details of what strategy Mr. Nixon was preparing to defend himself, particularly in light of the strong indications that the

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House will order a Senate trial of the President.

Satruday, while campaigning for Republican congressional candidates in the South, Vice President Ford conceded that "I think the odds have changed" and that the possibility is that a

House impeachment "will be unfavorable for the President."

The Constitution requires the vote of a simple majority in the House to set the stage for a Senate trial on one or more articles of impeachment.

Last Thursday Warren said that "our strategy will become known as events unfold." It is "much too serious" he added, "for me to stand here and parry back and forth."

White House aides insisted that a strategy had been developed but there were no external signs of one. And Warren reiterated that "the President will not resign." Mr. Nixon, he also said, had no plans to hold a news conference or address the nation.

One press conference on impeachment planned for today—that of House Minoirty Leader John J. Rhodes of Arizona to announce how he will vote on the articles of impeachment—was postponed yesterday until later in the week.

A spokesman for Rhodes said the congressman was in bed with a cold and "he can barely talk." Rhodes woke up yesterday "with a fever" and will not be on Capitol Hill today, the spokesman said.

When the Rhodes announcement is made this week depends on how the minority leader feels today, he added. He said that the White House had not contacted Rhodes yesterday about the announcement.

Since Rhodes is a leader of the Republican minority and a conservative, his decision on impeachment could be a bellwether.

A call for Mr. Nixon to step aside temporarily in favor of the Vice President was made yesterday by Sen. William Proxmire (D-Wis.), chairman of the Joint Economic Committee.

In a television interview, Proxmire said that the No. 1 prerequisite is "for Nixon to temporarily step down and hand over the whole authority of the presidency to Jerry Ford . . . The President is understandably preoccupied with his defense, and this preoccupation surely will get worse."

At the same time, Proxmire said it would be "just plain wrong" for Mr. Nixon to resign before the impeachment process had run its course.